

DREW PEARSON

Mary Jo's Face Haunting Memory

WASHINGTON—With the possible exception of the one man whom he replaced as majority whip, probably all the Democratic membership of the Senate was distressed and disturbed over the recent plight of Sen. Edward Kennedy. Now that he has returned to the Senate, they are sympathetic and eager to help him.

The Senate is a "club" in both reputation and fact, and even Sen. Tom Dodd, who had lost the respect of most of his colleagues by his cringing defense of his personal use of campaign funds, has been received with scrupulous courtesy — though many senators have hoped that he would resign.



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With Teddy it is different. For Teddy there has been genuine warmth and affection. This was not true in the case of his two elder brothers. Jack was absent a great deal. He was in the hospital with back trouble. He used to spend part of the winter at his father's Palm Beach home, from which he came back on one occasion to explain his negative vote against the Tennessee Valley Authority: "I guess I was around too many of Dad's economic royalists."

Bobby chafed at the routine of the Senate, was frequently absent, never attended committee meetings unless they really interested him, and although his voting record was excellent, he was never a working member of the club.

But Teddy has been continuously on the job. He picks his senate battles not because they are easy but because they affect the broadest segment of the population—the little people. In his short period as majority whip his Senate record has been magnificent.

BUT OLD Senate hands, much as they like him, wonder whether he can continue

to be effective following the tragedy of Chappaquiddick. It is not that senators are prudish about an office party or sex or drinking on the side. They think Teddy can live this down just as other members of his family have.

It is, rather, the memory of that dead girl, left under water for nine long hours when earlier she might have been rescued. That's the memory they think will come back to haunt Teddy, may influence Senate debate.

While he is in debate, while he is drumming up crucial votes on a roll call, while he is arguing in committee, how many senators will resist the picture of the pretty blond, abandoned, with her face up, gasping for breath, while their colleague from Massachusetts failed to summon help?

In the closed door intensity of party debate, when no record is being transcribed, it would be very easy for an opposing senator to question Kennedy's judgment by asking what kind of judgment he had exercised on the tragic night of July 18.

What kind of judgment had he exercised when he passed by the Dyke House, with a light burning, only eight or ten feet from the road and less than a hundred feet from the bridge where the tragedy occurred? And what kind of judgment did the senator exercise when he passed up other houses to walk back a mile and a quarter to the "party" cottage and even then not summon help?

HOW can the senator be so firm in his convictions regarding the need to abolish the oil depletion allowance, some senator is almost sure

to taunt, when he has exercised such erroneous judgment in the past?

Senators do not say these things in the heart of formal debate, or if they do, they are quickly expunged from the record.

But they can be virulent, even bitter, in whispered conversations on the floor or in Senate cloakrooms. It was only 30 years ago that Sen. Kenneth McKellar of Tennessee pulled a Bowie Knife on Sen. Royal Copeland of New York and lunged at him on the Senate floor. And during the Civil War, Rep. Preston Brooks of South Carolina walked over to the Senate floor and, using a heavy walking stick, so beat up Sen. Charles Sumner of Massachusetts that Sumner was incapacitated for three years.

It is highly unlikely that senators who get into a wrangle with Teddy will pass up the opportunity to ask him

how his conscience permitted him to ask the clerk of the Shiretown Inn at 2:25 a.m. to restrain a noisy party next door because he couldn't sleep, when his own conscience permitted him to forget about the golden-haired girl he had abandoned in his submerged car. Or why did he happen to be wearing a neatly pressed coat and trousers at that hour when he later testified that he had jumped into the water with his clothes on and swam across Chappaquiddick Channel?

In some respects it is not that these questions will be asked but rather that Teddy will know they could be asked, which may put a damper on the courage and energy of the promising young man from Massachusetts.

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MODERN senators on the whole are kindly and respectful. Newspapermen and politicians are not. And there are many of both who resent the manner in which the Kennedy juggernaut operates to suppress newspaper criticism of the Kennedys and to squelch political opposition to the Kennedy clan. The Kennedy juggernaut has been quiet of late. But it emerged from behind the scenes in full force the other weekend when ghostwriter after ghostwriter, ranging from ex-secretary Bobby McNamara to Arthur Schlesinger, who flew all the way back from Romania, converged on Cape Cod.

This is a mass display of strength which arouses resentment, not sympathy.

There are many politicians also who have come to grips with the Kennedy political machine, carefully greased, equipped with advance men, bands, private airplanes, advance publicity and hundreds of thousands of dollars of campaign funds surreptitiously spent in the right places but never accounted for.

They too have memories and they will not be as respectful as senators.